



Optometry clears up the fog of war
Page 3

Station sailors and civilians keep Marines seeing straight, from garrison to Iraq



22nd MEU conducts counterinsurgency ops
Page 10

Marines smoke out insurgents, weapons during four-day operation in Iraq



Black Widows scorch Tomcats, 75-33
Page 12

Battle of remaining undefeated teams ends in lopsided affair

Serving Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona



Volume 5, Number 7

www.yuma.usmc.mil

February 23, 2006

Black Sheep head to sea



Photo by Cpl. Matthew Rainey

Cpl. Michael Cantu, Marine Attack Squadron 214 Harrier mechanic and native of San Rafael, Calif., embraces his wife Samantha in front of his squadron hangar here before leaving for the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit Feb. 14. The detachment of Black Sheep will become a part of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 (Reinforced).

Cpl. Matthew Rainey
Combat Correspondent

Cupid missed his mark with the Marines of Marine Attack Squadron 214 this Valentine's Day. Marines from a VMA-214 Black

Sheep detachment left their friends and families behind Feb. 14 when they boarded a bus bound for San Diego and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The Black Sheep then transformed into SeaElks when they joined Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 (Reinforced) aboard the

U.S.S. Peleliu. For the next several months, 11th MEU Marines will be providing military force projection and regional security throughout the Pacific Ocean and Arabic Gulf regions.

Many Black Sheep are already familiar with the MEU experience. "I'm looking forward to another

ride with the 11th MEU," said Lance Cpl. Michael Desanto, VMA-214 embark chief. "I extended to go out one more time. I'll be making fat stacks of cash for when I get out."

While some VMA-214 Marines have already floated across the

See Sea Elks page 5

CSSC-133 sends Marines to Iraq

Pfc. Robert L. Botkin
Combat Correspondent

A detachment of approximately 15 Marines from Combat Service Support Company 133 departed the air station Feb. 19 for the Taqadum region of Iraq.

Once in Iraq, they will join up with Combat Logistics Regiment 15 to provide continued support for the coalition forces in the area.

The mission of CSSC-133 is to supply combat service support to Fleet Marine Force units in the form of intermediate supply support and maintenance support for engineer, motor transport and ordnance equipment.

This deployment, like most, has been met with enthusiasm from the

Marines involved.

"I volunteered," said Cpl. Ian M. Tyler, CSSC-133 motor transport mechanic and native of Knoxville, Tenn.

While no Marine can know exactly what to expect while deployed, the Marines of CSSC-133 have been doing what they can to prepare.

While the information they are given prior to deployment and the situation when they get there could be different, the constant training and readiness level of the Marine Corps has kept them prepared to adapt and overcome, said Sgt. Micah T. Kovacs, CSSC-133 utilities chief and native of Downingtown, Pa.

"I'll be doing a utilities chief billet, but it'll be a lot different, said Kovacs. "Now, I work on just Marine Corps gear, but over there, it's more like a civilian town. We're not shooting and moving as much as we

See Iraq page 4



Photo courtesy of Department of Defense

This is the first official photo of African-American Marines in a tank turret during World War II. The first African-American Marines were trained at Camp Montford Point, N.C., which is now Camp Lejeune, N.C. February is devoted to African-Americans who have helped America and the American Military.

Black history recognized on station

Pfc. Robert L. Botkin
Combat Correspondent

February was declared Black History Month 1976 to honor the many contributions African-American figures have made throughout history.

Originally, the second week of February was set aside for what was called Negro History Week because of the births of Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglass, but it was later expanded to include the whole month due to the ever-expanding influence African-Americans have had.

In an address given Feb. 7, President

George W. Bush spoke of the importance of Black History Month, saying, "Young Americans of all races need to learn about the black contribution to our history and culture."

Cultural achievements include both the development of new music and art styles, as well as a greater understanding of civil rights.

African-Americans have also contributed to American society in areas of scientific achievement.

African-American inventors are credited with the creation and improvement of modern comforts such as air conditioning and the light bulb.

"I think it's great that the nation recognizes them (for the entire) month,"

said Lance Cpl. Ian D. Olson, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron food service specialist and native of Kansas City, Mo. "They've contributed greatly to our way of life."

The contribution expands to the military community as well.

Bush said in his address how the example the Tuskegee Airmen, one of the first African American military units, set in World War II is still a shining example to the men and women of the United States military today.

"It doesn't matter what color your skin is," said Olson, "It says U.S. Marine on your chest. I don't care what the color of someone's skin is. The way I see it,

See History page 4



Photo by Cpl. Matthew Rainey

Sgt. Paul Bui, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 13 flight equipment technician, reenlists for four more years as 2nd Lt. Jeremy Huffman, MALS-13 division officer and native of Grapeview, Wash., leads him through the reenlistment oath Feb. 16 at the station's Ramada Field. Bui, a Arcadia, Calif., native, was guided through the reenlistment process by Marine Aircraft Group 13 career retention specialist Sgt. John Messer.

MAG-13 sets up Corps' first consolidated career planning office

Cpl. Matthew Rainey
Combat Correspondent

Marine Aircraft Group 13 and the Marine Corps have developed ways to make career exploration a much more efficient process.

The consolidated career retention specialist office MAG-13 established here on station in March 2005 and the new Automated Career Retention System the Corps released weeks ago give Marines easier access to career planning assets.

"MAG-13 has the (first and) only combined CRS office in the Marine Corps," said Sgt. David Killough, MAG-13 career retention specialist. "This works out better in case a CRS is out of the office for leave, temporary assigned duty, reenlistment ceremony or otherwise, because there are other career planners in the same office. We cover each others' squadrons when needed because a Marine should always have access to a career planner."

"The whole reason we switched to the combined office was for the availability of career planners and the convenience of the Marine," explained the Cocoa, Fla., native.

As a result of the new setup, MAG-13 Marines interested in reenlisting have more options.

"We doubled the amount of boat spaces we were able to secure for the Marines this year, and that's due to this office being combined," said Gunnery Sgt. Lloyd Clark, MAG-13 CRS. "With the old setup, retention stopped when a career planner went on leave or TAD. Now, Marines can come in any time and retention doesn't stop."

Like the rest of the west coast career planners, MAG-13 career planners recently received a new computer program to help them and the Marines they serve.

"The (Automated Career Retention System) has only been available for two or three weeks," said Killough. "The west coast is the (testing area) for it. The east coast doesn't even have it yet."

ACRS provides Marines with information ranging from points of contact to special duty assignments.

See ACRS page 4

OPINION

Field Day: one more trial

Cpl. Matthew Rainey
Combat Correspondent

I escaped just in time. When my wife suggested the idea of eloping instead of having a flashy marriage a little later, I jumped on the opportunity. I had proposed to her after all. A couple weeks after our wedding, my fellow coworkers who resided in the barracks began a series of moves and cleanings so their barracks could be remodeled.

The first move brought the Marines into a crummy building, increasing the need for more thorough field days. The next move brought them back to their original barracks. Now their rooms are remodeled so there is again a greater need for a more thorough field day to keep the improved rooms nice.

Some people may focus on the quality of the barracks when they think about improving the quality of life for Marines occupying those barracks. Personally, I don't think that the quality of the barracks is the main issue.

I think the Marines who lived in squad bays years ago would be ecstatic for the dorm-style rooms Marines have today, even as decrepit as some of them are.

When I was living in the barracks, my morale wasn't lowered when stinky black sludge would come up through the pipes and fill my sink once a month or so. In fact, one of my favorite barracks memories involved me walking in on one of my former roommates washing his dishes over the toilet because our sink had been filled with sludge for a couple days. I even enjoyed tent life in Iraq with the exception of when the air conditioning broke.

What caused me to temporar-

ily resent the Corps some time ago, were field days lasting well into the night, Marines getting treated like babies during field day and the ignored idea that a Marine may already have a field day-ready room before coming to field day formation.

The definition of discrimination is "treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit." According to that definition, it seems like when it comes to keeping Marines' homes clean, single Marines are being discriminated against.

What would happen if we treated married Marines the same way we treat single Marines during field day. What would happen if we made married Marines form up in the streets of their neighborhood in uniform, open all their doors and window blinds, and conduct a field day of their homes and neighborhood common areas? What would happen if we inspected their homes the same way we inspect the homes of the single Marines? Should I, as a married Marine, feel offended because the Marine Corps does not care if my home is sanitary and orderly?

I know that field days are run differently by different units, but from what I have experienced firsthand and heard from others living in different barracks, field day, in general, overrules common sense.

One thing that cracks me up

about field day is the emphasis on dust. We live in Yuma, Ariz. Movies are filmed here in our deserts because this place is so sandy and dusty. Yet if the seal on a Marine's barracks refrigerator door is dusty, he and his room are one step closer to being given a failing grade.

I haven't cleaned the seal on my refrigerator door since I moved into my home eight months ago, and I don't think anyone's health has been adversely affected because of it. None of my house guests have been disgusted by my neglect of the refrigerator door seal either. I don't even think they have noticed. They sure didn't refer to me as a "nasty."

I can do a general cleanup of my entire two bedroom, two bathroom home in less time than it takes to field day one barracks room. That's not because I'm such an efficient cleaner, but because field day standards are to the point of ridiculousness in my opinion.

I have been attached to a few units aboard Marine Corps Air Station Yuma. One of those units had a two-week-long field day as punishment for a broken TV remote control.

Notice that they used field day as punishment.

Thankfully, I wasn't among those Marines who were forced to field day during their days off and after they got off work. But I was able to see the negative effect the punishment had on their morale.

I've also heard of general cleanups being used as incentives and rewards for keeping rooms consistently above the standard. The Marines loved it.

I've spoken with senior enlisted Marines who said that we field day the way we do because it's necessary and that's the way it's always been done. They said that if they let Marines live like pigs, they will end up living like pigs.

Don't let single Marines live like pigs then. But don't force them to treat their homes like they are going to be the site of the next hospital operating room either.

I realize that Marines' rooms need to be cleaned regularly and that there needs to be a standard. I just think that general cleanup accomplishes that mission and keeps Marines happier. After all, troop welfare is the next most important thing after mission accomplishment.

The Marine Corps has been focused on making the barracks a better place to live. The Corps is pouring money into the barracks to improve morale and the retention rate of first-term Marines.

I don't think much, if any, money needs to be spent to improve the barracks. I think allowing Marines to come home to a place they can relax in will do the job. Giving Marines the flexibility to change the furniture placement in their room goes a long way. I think that merely backing down the strictness of field day to general cleanup will do more than giving Marines a new shiny faucet.

Marines' morale is linked to how to they spend their off-duty time. Their morale is affected whether they spend their time hanging out with their friends on Single Marine Program events or eliminating dust from their refrigerator door seals.

StreetTalk

What causes field day to be demoralizing to some Marines?



"There are lazy Marines in the barracks who the (non-commissioned officers) need to keep an eye on. Sometimes Marines need to clean until 11 p.m., but they bring it on themselves." -- Cpl. Argenis Diaz, MALS-13

"It can be demoralizing if a Marine gets off work and then he has to field day all night. It's not supposed to be a (hazing exercise). We need to let Marines know that field day isn't a (hazing exercise). We're just ensuring that the Marines have the best quality of life possible." -- Gunnery Sgt. Larry Johns, H&HS



"The only reason field day could be demoralizing for a Marine is because he is coming from a place that didn't do it properly and he isn't used to it. If the Marine comes from a unit that (was) complacent, then of course a Marine will be even more complacent when he comes to a unit with a regimented field day." -- Sgt. Nicolas Magallanes, H&HS

"A lot of the things that we have to do for field day are because of Marines who can't keep their rooms clean. The rest of us shouldn't be stuck there late at night. The Marines that actually go to field day end up getting stuck with the extra chores like morning cleanup too, while the Marines who are excused get away scott-free." -- Lance Cpl. Benjamin St. Cyr, H&HS



Chapel Call

Give me a drink

Lt. Dave Bachelor
MAG-13 Chaplain

When stationed in desert environments, proper hydration is most important. Marines are encouraged to drink plenty of water. In order to make sure every Marine drinks sufficient quantities, there are color-coded charts at appropriate places (I am trying to be delicate here) where Marines can check themselves to see if they need to drink more water.

Exceptions to the colors can occur. If a Marine takes vitamins, the color might seem to indicate that this warrior needs to hydrate. But in actuality, he or she is doing all right. A second exception arises if the warrior has been drinking alcohol. When the alcohol leaves the body, judging by color alone, this Marine might mistakenly conclude that he or she is properly hydrated. Instead, alcohol has, in fact, caused dehydration. That Marine has a problem and could be totally unaware of it.

Perhaps this may seem like a strange example for a chaplain to use to illustrate spiritual truths, but it really does have applications. Plus, I think it better to use it here among Marines than in the Sunday morning crowd.

I find a parallel between the physical and the spiritual.

Protestant Services:

Sunday - 9:30 a.m. Sunday school, 11 a.m. worship service. Bible studies available; contact chapel for times.

Catholic Mass:

Sunday - 8:15 a.m. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 9:30 a.m. Mass
Monday through Thursday - 7 a.m. Mass

For more information, visit the chapel at Building 1176 or call 269-2086.

Sometimes we attempt to do something to get closer to God. We think we have taken "spiritual" vitamins. Instead, we encounter resistance -- the color is darker than expected -- and we are tempted to think our efforts are not working. On the other hand, sometimes we feel fantastic. We think we are climbing the ladder of success. We hear people's praises and feel high. Life looks great.

But in reality we are actually drying up spiritually. We can't remember the last time we praised God.

The lesson of the desert is this. We have to be intentional about drinking water. We have to be just as intentional about watering our spirits.

Water, in various Bible verses, is associated with survival and with the best in life in terms of what God would give to you. Remember the line from Psalm 23? "He leads me beside still waters." So come to the water of God and drink it in. God's word is his water and it will make you live a new and different life. Otherwise you may dry up and become a heat casualty in your spiritual experiences.

The views and comments expressed in the opinion articles of the Desert Warrior are the author's individual opinions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense, the United States Marine Corps or Marine Corps Air Station Yuma. If you have an opinion that you would like to see published, submit your article or letter to michael.a.turner3@usmc.mil or rebecca.newton@usmc.mil or bring it to the Public Affairs Office in Building 852.

DESSERT WARRIOR

Col. Ben D. Hancock
Commanding Officer

Staff Sgt. Michael A. Turner
Press Chief

Capt. Beatriz Yarrish
Public Affairs Officer

Sgt. Rebecca Newton
Editor

Master Sgt. Steven J. Nelson
Public Affairs Chief

Cpl. Matthew Rainey
Sports Editor

The Desert Warrior is published Thursday of each week by Aerotech News and Review, Inc. at no cost to the government. It complies with publication and printing requirements of the Navy and Marine Corps.

The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense. It is for informational purposes only and in no way should be considered directive in nature. All queries concerning news and editorial content should be directed to: Public Affairs Office, P.O. Box 99113, Yuma, AZ 85369-9113 or 269-2275.

Everything advertised in this publication must be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age or sex of the purchaser, the user or the patron. A confirmed violation or rejection of this policy will result in refusal to print advertising from that source. All queries concerning business matters or display ads should be directed to Aerotech News and Review, Inc. at (623) 487-7321.

(Below and right) Samuel Jarvis, optometry student at the University of Houston and Navy Health Services Collegiate Program scholarship recipient, uses a phoropter to determine the correct prescription for Marti Pugh Feb. 17 at the Branch Medical Clinic here. Jarvis is completing his residency requirements here in order to get experience as an optometrist and to acquaint himself with naval medicine. The optometry clinic at the BMC sees patients from the air station, as well as Yuma Proving Ground and Naval Air Facility, El Centro, Calif.



Photos by Pfc. Robert L. Botkin

Optometry sailors keep station seeing straight

Pfc. Robert L. Botkin
Combat Correspondent

A problem that coalition forces in Iraq have been having is not being able to distinguish the enemy from noncombatants, but the sailors at the Branch Medical Clinic are making sure all service members are equipped with the proper senses to make the distinction as best they can.

One of the most important senses to troops is their sight, which can tell the difference between seeing a weapon and a walking stick.

“The warfighter definitely has to see what is going on,” said Lt. Cmdr. Todd Lauby, BMC optometrist. “Their vision is very important to them.”

From the S-9 basic issue frames issued in recruit training, to gas mask inserts and even refractive surgery referral, the optometry department at the BMC en-

sures that every Marine is able to clearly perceive what is actually happening in front of them.

The basic issue glasses aren’t the only option though.

The frame-of-choice program was developed in the past 10 years to provide another set of glasses to wear that might not have quite the same stigma about them as the thick plastic frames associated with the basic issue glasses.

“The frame-of-choice program was started by the Navy and then picked up by the Army and the Air Force,” said Lauby, a native of Westerville, Ohio. “We offer about seven or eight different styles of metal frames that are fairly fashionable and give Marines a chance not to wear their S-9 frames around.”

The frame-of-choice program also might help some Marines save money by not having to go buy glasses from a civilian optometrist, said Lauby.

Marines and sailors are not the only ones who are seen at the optometry clinic

though. In addition to all of the family members and retirees in the area, the clinic also sees all of the soldiers from the Yuma Proving Ground and Naval Air Facility, El Centro, Calif., said Lauby. This can lead to a busy schedule, especially in the winter with all of the winter visitors.

At the moment, the clinic does have some help in the form of Samuel Jarvis, an optometry student from the University of Houston, who is fulfilling his residence requirements at the BMC. Jarvis is a Navy Health Services Collegiate Program scholarship recipient, so once he graduates, he will train to be a Navy officer. Having his residency at the BMC will help Jarvis get his experience in the field and acquaint him with naval medicine, said Lauby.

In addition, the BMC also orders extra eyewear

for troops who are deploying, said Petty Officer 1st Class Israel Medina, BMC optician.

Deploying troops are issued a pair of prescription ballistic eyewear and inserts for their goggles to ensure that they have proper vision correction whether they are working in a building or on convoy duty.

This is important because the Central Command in Iraq issued an order in January 2005 prohibiting the wear of contact lenses for U.S. forces in the area due to health concerns, said Medina.

“Contact lenses can cause lots of health problems in Iraq,” said Medina. “With water being limited and all of the sand and dust, it’s very easy to get something caught in between the lens and the cornea, scratching it or causing infection.”

With continued operations in Iraq, the job of the optometry clinic has become even more important, said Lauby.

“Glasses are very important now,” said Lauby. “It’s very important that they see their best while they’re in combat.”



(Above) Lt. Cmdr. Todd Lauby, Branch Medical Clinic Aviation Optometrist and native of Westerville, Ohio, uses a slit lamp biomicroscope to examine the surface of the left eye of Petty Officer 1st Class Jerome Higgins, Marine Attack Squadron 211 corpsman, Feb. 17 at the BMC here. In addition to active duty, the optometry clinic also sees all family members and retirees, which can lead to a packed schedule during the winter months. The optometry clinic runs a comprehensive battery of tests on all of the patients it sees to determine the correct prescription for corrective lenses.

(Right) Petty Officer 1st Class Israel Medina, Branch Medical Clinic optician, performs an auto refraction on Petty Officer 1st Class Jerome Higgins, a native of Chicago, Feb. 17 at the BMC here. The auto refraction is used to get an estimate of the patient’s prescription for the optometrist to use as a starting point in the examination. Once diagnosed, active duty patients are issued a pair of basic issue glasses, a second pair with a frame of their choice and gas mask inserts.



ACRS ... from page 1

“ACRS gives a Marine contact info for that specific Marine’s CRS. It also has info listed for a backup career planner as well in case their primary one isn’t available,” said Killough.

“Marines can schedule appointments and interviews with career planners,” he added. “They can request information on special duty assignments too. We can keep track of all that information to see what that Marine is interested in and what they are considering for their future.”

If Marines have a simple question or they just want to know what kind of options they have, ACRS can be used as a quick reference.

“The ACRS can answer a lot of questions Marines ask us and it’s just a couple clicks away,” said Sgt. John Messer, MAG-13 CRS. “It shows them opportunities they may not even know about and it shows them what they are eligible

for. Any questions they have after that, we can answer them.”

Half of the battle career planners now face is getting the word out about the new system.

“The main thing is that Marines know that they have access to ACRS through their Marine On-Line account,” said Killough. “Marines need to be aware that they have a new avenue to check out career options and get in touch with their career planner.”

If a Marine has access to MOL, he has access to ACRS.

“They can begin using ACRS by logging in to MOL, clicking on the resources link and then clicking on the ACRS link,” explained Killough. “They’ll need to check their account once or twice a week (for messages and updates).”

Like many new programs, there are a few bugs that are yet to be corrected concerning ACRS.

“It’s a new system, so there are

still a few quirks that need to be worked out,” said Killough. “For example, ACRS is running on east coast time right now. So when we schedule appointments, we have to make sure we schedule them for two hours ahead of when we actually want to have the appointment.”

Despite the small problems, ACRS appears to be the future of career planning.

“I see the new way being a lot more effective because you can keep track of Marines better and it gets rid of the paperwork because everything is automated,” said Killough.

Despite career planners not being present in each squadron’s hangar and using the new program, CRSs will still see Marines face-to-face.

“Marines will still be in contact with their career planners. We’ll still visit the units to show our fac-

es and make ourselves available. We’ll still call the Marines, too, because we know that not every Marine checks MOL regularly.”

Messer, a Goshen, Ohio, native, admitted that, even as a career planner, he is still in the process of learning about ACRS, but he said it is definitely going to be a useful tool.

As soon as ACRS has successfully completed its testing phase, more options will be added to it.

“Once ACRS gets going full speed sometime around September, (commanding officers) will be able to approve reenlistments on the spot,” said Clark, an Inglewood, Calif., native.

Marines who enjoy paperwork will soon be out of luck because the old system is going to be obsolete.

“Marines can begin using ACRS now,” said Killough. “We don’t even have all the old forms anymore.”



Photo by Pfc. Robert L. Botkin

Sgt. Phillip Green, Combat Service Support Company 133 motor transportation mechanic and native of New Orleans, La., removes the starter on a Humvee Feb. 21 at the CSSC-133 headquarters building here. A detachment of Marines from CSSC-133 left Feb. 17 for Iraq.

Iraq ... from page 1

used to, so we don’t use much of our gear. It’s going to be a change of pace for me.”

Tyler said he also anticipates performing his usual military occupational specialty while deployed, and while he will be working on Marine Corps equipment, he has still been preparing in his own way for Iraq.

Knowing that Iraq has a climate even hotter than Yuma, Ariz., Tyler said he has been getting a jump-start on his hydration techniques so that he won’t be surprised once he reaches Taqaddum.

Some Marines have had to do more work preparing.

“I won’t be doing my main job over there,” said Lance Cpl. Choung Le, CSSC-133 legal services specialist and native of Le-Grange, Ill. “I’ll be with a security company.”

Le said he was sent to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., for three weeks along with other Marines who are deploying to participate in Exercise Mojave Viper.

The training focused on combat operations, including convoy security and military operations in urban terrain, but Le said he took more away from it than just that.

“I got close to a lot of (the Marines),” said Le, who was previously with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, “especially my fire team and my squad.”

This helped Le build the trust and confidence he said is vital in a combat environment.

“If you can’t trust your own fire team members or your leaders if something goes down, then it’s tough to know whether to follow orders or make your own call,” said Le.

Despite his previous unfamiliarity with the Marines he’s deploying with, Le said his MOS never entered the picture during the training.

“It’s just like they say, ‘every Marine is a rifleman,’” said Le. “I wasn’t really behind the curve, because we all receive combat training before any specialized training.”

“No one knew what (my job was),” said Le. “They just saw me as another Marine.

“I just want to make sure that everybody is safe and everybody comes home,” said Le. “That and making sure that we accomplish the mission are the most important parts of the deployment.”

they’re just a co-worker.”

The first African-American Marines enlisted July 1, 1942, and were trained at Camp Montford Point, N.C., which is now Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Black History Month is not accepted by everyone though. Actor Morgan Freeman criticized Black History Month as inadequate.

“I don’t want a black history month,” said Freeman in the December 18, 2005 episode of “60 Minutes.”

Freeman explained he believes that racism will persist as long as individuals continue to identify themselves by their skin color.

This opinion is echoed by many others, even though some appreciate the idea of Black History Month.

“I believe black history is American history,” said Lance Cpl. Colin J. McKenna, H&HS temporary additional duty clerk and native of Long Island, N.Y. “It’s another way to learn more about what made this country great.”

While racism is still present in today’s culture, progress has been made from the time in our nation’s history when one in seven people were the property of another person, said Bush.

“We’re making progress,” said Bush, “but there’s more work to be done.”

The burden of eliminating racism rests on the individual, said McKenna. It does not matter how open or accepting any one person is if another 10 are still prejudiced.

That’s why, as W.E.B. DuBois, civil rights leader and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored



Photo courtesy of usmc.mil

Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen, the first African-American general, was a former commanding general of Marine Corps Combat Development Command Quantico, Virginia. He is one of the African Americans honored by Black History Month, which has been observed every February since 1976.

People, once said, “We appeal to the young men and women of this nation ... Stand up for the right, prove yourselves worthy of your heritage and ... dare to treat men as men.”

Advertisements

Pacific on their way to Iraq for previous deployments, others made their way to the battle zone via the air-express route.

“This is going to be my first (ship) deployment. It’s going to be a lot different than just flying to Iraq like before,” said Capt. Derek Bibby, VMA-214 AV-8B Harrier II pilot. “The MEU mission is our bread and butter as Harrier guys and I’m really looking forward to it. It’s kind of the reason the Harrier exists.”

Preparation, an essential asset to any operation, has put some of the younger Marines at ease by giving them a taste of what they can expect during the upcoming months.

“The workups were great,” said Lance Cpl. William Meiss, VMA-214 aviation electrician. “I finally got an idea of what my job will be when we are on the boat. I got a taste of (ship) life. I’m excited for this deployment. It’s my first one. I’m looking forward to getting out and seeing the world.”

During the workup, some Marines were worked aboard ship for the first time, while pilots were logging flight hours at sea.

“We’ve been doing the normal workups and flying mostly MEU training missions,” said Bibby, a native of Yuma, Ariz. “We’ve also been flying quite a few standard training missions in case we end up going to Iraq again.”

The squadron’s embarkation Marines are just happy that the deployment is finally underway.

“It’s been tough to prepare for this deployment from an embark perspective,” said Desanto, a native of Oakland, Calif. “We had three workups for this MEU. Now that we are actually leaving, I only have to move our gear a couple more



Photo by Cpl. Matthew Rainey

Marines from Marine Attack Squadron 214 stage their sea bags and gear in front of their squadron hangar here as they prepare to leave for San Diego and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit Feb. 14. The detachment of Black Sheep will call the U.S.S. Peleliu home for the next few months as they deploy to the western Pacific Ocean and Arabic Gulf regions to project military force in those areas.

times. I’m ready to roll.”

Family members and friends were waiting with Marines when the buses arrived to escort the Marines away.

“It sucks that we’re leaving on Valentines Day, but we’ve got to go. I’m still excited about going. This is my first (ship deployment),” said Lance Cpl. Travis Derwin, VMA-214 avionics technician. “I just have a lot more responsibilities for this deployment than the last one because I have a wife, son and bills to think about. My son is seven months old and I’m going to miss him crawling, walking and eventually talking.

“I’m still going to be focused on work and making it back home,” explained the Wells, N.Y., native. “I might be thinking

about when I will be going home a little more this time though.”

Lance Cpl. Jason Riggins, VMA-214 avionics technician, said that leaving on Valentine’s Day would never lower his morale.

“I love this country. I’m always ready to go,” said the Columbia, Tenn., native. “I took care of my Valentine’s Day business with my wife ahead of time. Marines deploy; that’s what we do.”

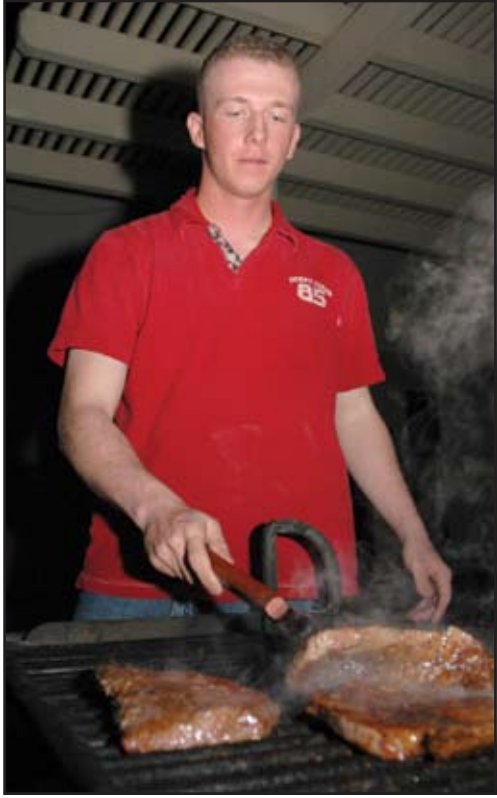
While single Marines may not have had to part with their families, at least one Marine had to separate with something personal that he held dear.

“I don’t have any hearts to break,” said Desanto, “but I did have a hard time parting with my car.”



Photos by Pfc. Robert L. Botkin

Marines chow down on President’s Day



(Above) Lance Cpl. Bobby Cunnane, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron air traffic controller, pours barbecue sauce over his steak Feb. 20, Presidents Day, in the Victory Kiva outside Building 720. While the temperature was not as warm as the Marines had hoped for, they all agreed that the Presidents Day barbecue brought them together as Marines and was an appropriate way to honor presidents past, present and future.

(Left) Lance Cpl. Alexander Barrett, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron air traffic controller, turns a steak Feb. 20, in the Victory Kiva outside Building 720. In celebration of Presidents Day, Barrett bought steak for himself and roughly 10 other Marines.

Advertisements

AT EASE



Photo courtesy of the Humane Society of Yuma, Ariz.

Looking for love

Merlin, an unaltered adult male, is seeking a home where he will be loved and cherished. He came to the shelter as a stray, so he is looking for someone who will be gentle and kind. Merlin is a big cat with striking green eyes and lots of affection to give. For more information about adopting Merlin, call 782-1621.

The Humane Society of Yuma, Ariz., has dozens of dogs and cats in need of good homes. Cost of adoptions include immunizations, spaying or neutering the animal, a free veterinary checkup and 30 days of pet insurance. The society also needs volunteers and donations. They currently need cleaning supplies, bedding, kitty litter, food and monetary donations. For more information about helping the Humane Society of Yuma, call 782-1621.

News to Use

Free “returning home” DVD

TriWest, the TRICARE West regional contractor, has created a DVD to assist Global War on Terrorism veterans in making the readjustment home after long absences. They are offering the DVD free of charge and no cost for shipping. Orders can now be placed by going to <http://www.triwest.com>. Click on the DVD icon. Order one or up to 1,000.

TRICARE rate hikes

The Defense Department is proposing that working-age military retirees and their families pay higher premiums to help address rising health care costs that have doubled over the past few years. The proposed changes would apply only to eligible military retirees under age 65 and their families. There would be no change for active duty military or their families, or military retirees age 65 or older and their families. The proposed rate hikes will be phased in over fiscal years 2007 and 2008. To view the official proposed rate increases, go to <http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourcesContent/0,13964,87323,00.html>.

Civilian certification program

The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program is a formal military training program that provides active duty Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy service members the opportunity to improve their job skills and to complete their civilian apprenticeship requirements while they are on active duty. Service members get recognition for their jobs in the civilian world by logging their hours during on-the-job training and meeting the knowledge specifications of the program. For more information on USMAP, visit <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp>.

2006 election season

The 2006 election season officially starts March 7 with the Texas State Primary. The Federal Post Card Application is available to all U.S. citizens from local voting assistance officers and the Federal Voting Assistance Program Web site at <http://www.fvap.gov>. Completed applications should be mailed to the applicant's local voting official in their state of residence. The “2006-07 Voting Assistance Guide,” located on the FVAP site, includes a list of the mailing addresses for local voting officials. The dates for state primaries are spread throughout the year. More information on state election dates can be found at <http://www.cni.navy.mil/NavyVote/Index.html>.

Navy advancement exams

The station will hold Navy-wide March 2006 Cycle 191 advancement exams for petty officer third class through petty officer first class in March. The exams for E-6 will be administered March 2, E-5s will test March 9 and E-4 exams are scheduled for March 16. All exams will be held at 7:15 a.m. in the fellowship hall of the station chapel. For more information, call 269-3112.

Free tax assistance

The station tax center is now open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday in Building 852 to process both federal and state returns for all service members and their families. The service is free. With electronic filing, service members and their families receive refunds in 7-10 days. For more information, call 269-3277.

MCCS Events

Great Escape

Semper Fit will host the Great Escape Community Event Tuesday from 6-7:30 p.m. at the community center. The \$5 fee includes snacks, drinks and instruction in Latin dance. For more information, call 269-2013.

Flagstaff trip

Arizona Adventures will host a snow ski trip to Flagstaff, Ariz., Friday through Sunday. The \$25 fee includes transportation and lodging. For more information, call 269-2848.

Childcare availability

The Child Development Center has free childcare available for spouses of military members who are deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Parents must call in advance to reserve a spot for Tuesday or Thursday night from 6-9 p.m. or the first Saturday of each month from 6-11 p.m. For more information, call 269-3234.

Hang out night

The station youth center will host a teens-only hang out night Friday from 7-10 p.m. Station youths who bring a friend will receive a free gift. Free snacks and a basketball competition will be available. For more information, call 269-5390/3659.

Children's baseball

Youth sports will host tee-ball and coach pitch baseball beginning April 1. Tee-ball will be offered to children 5-7 years old. Youths 7-16 years old can sign up for coach pitch. Registration runs until March 6. For more information, call 269-5308.

Theater special

The station theater is offering a special deal for February where service members who pay five admissions get a sixth free. The theater has cards to be stamped to earn credit for the special. For more information, call 269-2358.

Marine Corps Community Services' 411 Infoline is available for information on the go. Just dial 269-1411 to receive updated information and contact numbers for MCCS services and events. The line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In Theater

Tonight

7 p.m. Rumor Has It (PG-13)

Friday

6 p.m. The Ringer (PG-13)

9 p.m. Fun with Dick and Jane (PG-13)

Saturday

4 p.m. Hoodwinked (PG)

7 p.m. Munich (R)

Sunday

5 p.m. The Ringer (PG-13)

Monday

7 p.m. Munich (R)

Tuesday

7 p.m. The Producers (PG-13)

Wednesday

7 p.m. Hoodwinked (PG)

Movies are subject to change; call 269-2358 or visit <http://www.yuma.usmc-mccs.org.TheaterSchedules.htm>.

10th Annual Frontier Frolic

The 10th Annual Frontier Frolic will be held Saturday at the Yuma Crossing State Historic Park. The Frontier Frolic will include Irish folk music from Yuma's Chuckwalla Rhythm Kings, food from Texas Roadhouse and a silent auction. Tickets, which will include entry and food, can be purchased for \$20 at the Peanut Patch at 4322 E. County 13th, Sant Drug at 419 West 8th St., Rural Metro Fire Department at 2029 South Arizona Avenue and the Habitat for Humanity Re-Store at 2325 South Engler Avenue.

Spring training baseball

The Caballeros de Yuma will sponsor 2006 spring training baseball games at Desert Sun Stadium, 1440 Desert Hill Drive, March 25 and March 26. On March 25, the Arizona Diamondbacks will take on the San Diego Padres at 1:05 p.m. General admission tickets are available on game day at the stadium box office for \$6 beginning at 10 a.m. Pre-game tickets can be purchased Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Caballeros office, 377 South Main St, Suite 204. Infield box tickets are \$16,

Liberty Call

outfield box and infield reserved tickets are \$12 and reserved outfield tickets are \$10. On March 26, the San Diego Padre Stars of the Future will face the Arizona Diamondbacks Stars of the Future at 1:05 p.m. All tickets for this game are \$3, available at the Caballeros office or at the stadium ticket office on game day.

Low airfare

Blue Star Moms, a support and service chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., has succeeded in having a resolution passed in Congress that urges airline services to provide active duty military members with “airfares that are comparable to the lowest airfare for ticketed flights” and to offer service members increased flexibility in cancellation, modification and purchase requirements without time limits, fees or penalties. For more information about how to take advantage of the resolutions, visit

<http://bluestarmoms.org/airfare.html>.

Operation Uplink

Launched in 1996, Operation Uplink is an innovative program that provides free pre-paid phone cards to active duty military personnel and hospitalized veterans. Operation Uplink has already distributed over seven million prepaid phone cards -- representing more than 105 million minutes of phone time. To submit units or names of recipients, to make donations or to find out about volunteer opportunities, contact Linda Ferguson at (816) 756-3390.

2006 Fore Paws Classic

The Humane Society of Yuma, Ariz., will host the 2006 Fore Paws Classic golf tournament at 8 a.m. April 8 at the Mesa Del Sol Golf Course. Four-man teams will play straight scramble for 18 holes. There

will be a two drive quota for each team member and a minimum handicap of 60 for each team. Specials will be held for Longest drive, closest to the pin, skins and mulligan. The Humane Society is still seeking sponsors for raffles and lunch for the event. For more information, call Elkie Wills at 782-1621.

Show tunes concert

The Yuma Art Center will host a Broadway and movie-themed concert March 5 at 3 p.m. For \$5, residents can enjoy the Arizona Western youth choir perform selections from “Phantom of the Opera,” “The Music Man,” “A Walk to Remember,” “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat” and more. For more information, call Beth Tibbs at 317-6019 or 417-8066.

Mariachi concert

The Yuma Arts Center will present a mariachi calafina concert March 17 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 at the door, or \$10 at the Yuma Arts Center before March 17. For more information, call 782-7423.

Advertisements

MWSS-371 builds from the ground up

Cpl. Matthew Rainey
Combat Correspondent

Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 Marines who have been working along a strip of Hart Street for the past couple weeks have been feeling like they are, all in all, just another brick in the wall. Since Feb. 1, MWSS-371 combat engineers have been getting down and dirty, laying concrete and block in an effort to pave the way for a future Marine Corps Community Services facility. “MCCS maintenance is going to be using this area as a vehicle storage area,” said Sgt. Justin Tucker, MWSS-371 combat engineer. “We’re building a wall to separate the lot from the surrounding

streets and prevent (unauthorized) access.” In an effort to save money, the Marines were called in as construction-oriented weapons of opportunity. “The government can save more than half the money a project like this would normally cost by having Marines do the work instead of hiring civilians,” explained Tucker, a native of Brushton, N.Y. “We eliminate the middle man and labor costs.” MWSS-371 Marines are not looking at the project as a burden though. “We approved this project because we’re getting some great training out of this,” said Tucker. “I’d say ninety-five percent of the Marines out here today have minimum experience doing this kind of work,” he

explained. “The leaders out here are trying to share their experience and guide the younger Marines through this hands-on training.” Even the Marines who have masonry experience are picking up new tricks of the trade. “I used to lay concrete and block back home and at school a couple months ago,” said Pfc. Brandon DeWitt, MWSS-371 combat engineer. “I’m still learning a lot out here. The sergeants have been teaching us how everything comes together. “This kind of training is much better than training with books,” added DeWitt, a native of Lakeview, Ore. “I’d rather have hands-on training because it shows you how you need to pay attention to detail.” The Marines will have one month to get fully acquainted with their trade.



Photos by Cpl. Matthew Rainey

Pfc. Richard Wild, Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 combat engineer and native of Detroit, relocates a stack of blocks to a more convenient place for his fellow coworkers Feb. 10. The MWSS-371 Marines are fencing in a future Marine Corps Community Services maintenance vehicle lot located next to the gas station and auto hobby shop on station. After completing the project, a detachment of MWSS-371 Marines will go to Naco, Ariz., to lay concrete as part of a joint task force.



Lance Cpl. Kenneth Bozeman, Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 combat engineer and native of Seacry, Ark., uses a sledgehammer and a level to tap a block into its place atop a wall Feb. 10. The wall is being built on station on the corner of Hart Street and Alward Avenue.

“We’re building it 11 courses, or 11 blocks, high. There’s a lot to it,” explained Tucker. “We have to measure everything and level it. There are (MWSS-371 Marines) out here from drafting and surveying to measure the appropriate depths for the footers. “Once the wall is complete, all the blocks that have reinforcement bar running through them will be filled with grout to hold everything together and strengthen the wall,” he added. When the Marines complete the wall, MWSS-371 will move on to bigger and tougher tasks. “We are leaving in April to go to Naco, Arizona, for a (joint task force) mission next to the Mexican border,” said Tucker. “We’ll mainly be building low-water crossings. “What we are doing now gives the Marines an opportunity to see how concrete works and to give others refresher training before we go to Naco,” explained Tucker. “We’ll be laying over 1,000 cubic yards of concrete while we are there. For this wall, we’ve laid seven (cubic yards of concrete).” Although the Naco job may seem gigantic in comparison to their current project, the combat engineers are prepared to spend some quality time focused on their craft. “On our typical JTF mission, we will improve roads, build water crossings and fences. Most of the time we are there, we will work six days a week, sun-up to

sundown,” said Sgt. Nathan Dunmire, MWSS-371 construction foreman. “Occasionally, we interact with the community, but we’re not there to help the (U.S.) Border Patrol. We are there to focus on our mission.” Army, Navy and Marine Corps units take turns participating in the JTF mission to Naco to ensure that constant progress is being made. “Just about every unit takes their turn and sends a detachment of thirty to forty people out to the JTF. We take people out from every job field we need to represent,” said Dunmire, a Houston native. “Everyone out at the site is there for about a month. We’ll pick up where they left off and somebody else will pick up where we leave off.” As the units involved in the JTF work together, so must the Marines of the individual units come together to complete projects such as the wall MWSS-371 Marines are erecting on station. “This project is about pulling the platoon together to work as a team and teaching some of the Marines mason skills,” said Dunmire. “We’re teaching them how and why we do some of the things we do and we are throwing some new techniques at them.” Some Marines have already grasped the teamwork concept. “Everybody has to do their part to make this happen,” said DeWitt. “Even though we are all spread out (along the wall), we are working as a team.”

Advertisements



Photos by Cpl. Giovanni Lobello

Sam Grant, 5, Mardi Gras participant, gambles to beat the overwhelming odds of the Color Coded Challenge at the station's youth center's Mardi Gras party Feb. 18. A total of 13 games were offered including hole in one, balloon pop, beanbag toss and tattoo parlor.



Mardi Gras participants Caty Kong (Left) , 4, Sydnie Simpson, 9 and Terry Gallegos, take a break from the festivities of the Mardi Gras party and eat a few snacks at the station's youth center Feb. 18.

Youth center parties Mardi Gras style

Cpl. Giovanni Lobello
Combat Correspondent

The station's youth center opened its doors to station children of all ages to celebrate with a Mardi-Gras-themed party Feb. 18.

The party is done annually in order to give children an idea of what the real Mardi Gras celebration is like.

"This is one of the children's favorite events," said Pat Carson, youth director. "This year, we were a little behind schedule because we made bouquets for Valentines Day. But once we finished with the bouquets, the children were already asking, 'What can we do to help?'"

To enter the Mardi Gras, children paid \$3 per person. As part of the entrance fee, the children received 500 Mardi Gras bucks and a Mardi Gras cup. With that money, children could play games and purchase food, such as nachos, popcorn and hot dogs.

"The kids can also take the Mardi Gras money to play games, which cost about 100 bucks per game," said Carson. "But at those games the children have the opportunity to double and even triple their money. Then whenever the children feel like it, they can go into the gym and trade in their Mardi Gras bucks for prizes."

The 13 games offered included hole in one, balloon pop, beanbag toss and tattoo parlor.

"This year, we had more man-made games than in the past," said Melissa Giboyeaux, program technician. "Each teacher was assigned to come up with one game for the party. This was by far the best Mardi Gras yet -- in total almost one hundred people attended. In the old building, we had to have

everything confined to just one room. Here, we were able to divide everything into different rooms of the Youth Center."

The Mardi Gras attendees also had opportunities to win raffle prizes throughout the night. The prizes included a soccer or football chair or a stuffed animal.

Even though the party was designed for the station's children, parents were still encouraged to attend.

"We also recommend parents come out and spend time with their children here," said Carson. "There are chaperones here looking after the children, so the parents can just come, sit back, and let their children run loose and have fun."

"We just wanted to go out as a family and do something together," said Master Sgt. Steve Zachmann, communications chief, Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1. "(Marine Corps Community Services) does a lot of fun stuff for the family, which is pretty neat. There were many game variations for the children to play with. The different games also varied for the different age groups."

Children of all ages seemed to enjoy both the food and fun provided by the youth center at the Mardi Gras party.

"I thought the food was really good here," said Taylor Bergan, 11, Mardi Gras attendee. "I also liked the games. They were a lot of fun. I won so much money that I don't even know how much it is. The hole-in-one was my favorite game because I got the most money there. I was very (excited) about the party because last year my friend told me how much fun it was, and he was right. It was a lot of fun. I would like to attend again next year if they put it on again. The party was well done the way it is and I don't think they have to change anything."



(Above) Charlotte Wilson, 12, bingo controller, turns the basket wheel in preparation to call out a number for the children participating in an intense bingo game at the youth center's Mardi Gras party Feb. 18. Children received 500 Mardi Gras bucks and a Mardi Gras cup. With that money, children could play games and purchase foods, such as nachos, popcorn and hot dogs.



(Right) Alexis Zaja, 11, Mardi Gras participant, throws a dice with hopes to land on a winning number on the Dice Toss game board and win more Mardi Gras bucks at the Youth Center's Mardi Gras party Feb. 18. The Mardi Gras attendees also had opportunities to win random raffle prizes throughout the night. Almost 100 people attended the Mardi Gras-themed party at the youth center here.



Liliana Espino, 7, marks her number on the bingo card during a bingo game at the station's youth center's Mardi Gras party Feb. 18.

AROUND THE CORPS

Marines, Iraqis finish Smokewagon

Cpl. Christopher S. Vega
22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit

HIT, Iraq -- During a recent four-day operation, dubbed Operation Smokewagon, Iraqi army soldiers and elements of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) conducted a sweep of numerous villages south of Hit, Iraq, seeking insurgents and weapons caches. The majority of the house-to-house searches were conducted by Iraqi soldiers and Marines with Battalion Landing Team 1st

Battalion., 2nd Marines' Bravo Company and Golf Battery.

These units, supported by MEU Service Support Group 22, battled rain and muddy terrain while maneuvering through small villages and the numerous irrigated fields along the Western Euphrates River valley northwest of Ramadi.

During the second day of the operation, Iraqi army soldiers and the Marines of B Company were crossing a canal when they came into contact with insurgents.

With half of a platoon across a canal, one fire team pushed ahead to clear an abandoned building,

when they were met by more enemy fire.

As more Marines were crossing the canal less than 100 yards away, shots rang throughout the field. One phrase from Staff Sgt. David Marino, a platoon sergeant with Bravo Company, was heard by every Marine, "It's game time, Gents! Let's move, Marines!"

The Iraqi soldiers and Marines returned fire and formed a line to flank the building in an attempt to flush the insurgents out.

While taking fire, the Marines pushed to the building in squad rushes, a tactic taught as early as recruit training. When the Marines

and Iraqi soldiers reached the building, three insurgents ran out with their hands raised, surrendering. They were quickly searched and moved away from the building, past the bodies of the three insurgents who had opened fire on the Marines to start the engagement.

During a check of the dead insurgents, one had a belt laden with explosives strapped across his chest. Another insurgent had a grenade, pin pulled, in his now lifeless grasp.

Marino made the Iraqi soldiers and Marines move away in case the explosives detonated.

"Get everyone back," Marino spoke calmly into his radio. "Everyone watch yourself, there could be more. Stay alert and get in a defensive position."

Marines took accountability and checked for casualties. After all Iraqi soldiers and Marines were accounted for, fire teams were sent to clear the canal adjacent to the building the insurgents were using. There were reports of another insurgent who had fired and then ran into the brush by the canal.

While checking tall reeds in the canal, Marines found and killed the fourth armed insurgent who had evaded the Marines after the initial firefight. The body and weapon were pulled out of the knee-deep mud of the canal banks.

"These Marines did an awesome job," said 2nd Lt. Ryan Bumgardner, of Columbia, S.C., and platoon commander with B Company. "They did what they needed to do. They used the training they've received,

and I couldn't be more proud of them."

The company continued with their mission of clearing houses and later joined with BLT 1/2's Golf Battery to conduct sweeps of larger villages.

"I'm just glad we finally managed to get rid of some (enemy contact)," said Lance Cpl. Keshon Nwaogu, of Hempstead, N.Y., a squad automatic weapon gunner for Bravo Co. "It may have been

a little fight, but the fact is we got rid of more insurgents. Whether dead or detained, they're still gone."

Iraqi soldiers with 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division and the Marines of Bravo Co., Battery G, found and destroyed numerous weapons caches over the next two days, including several improvised explosive devices and rocket propelled grenade launchers.



Photo by Sgt. Robert A. Sturkie

A Marine with Golf Battery, Battalion Landing Team 1st Bn., 2nd Marines, searches a crevice where explosive materials were found hidden in Muhamadi, Iraq during Operation Smokewagon Feb. 2. The 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) is conducting counter-insurgency operations in Al Anbar, Iraq, alongside an Iraqi infantry battalion, collectively under the tactical control of the 2nd Marine Division.



Photo by Cpl. Christopher S. Vega

Lance Cpls. Mark Cochrine and Bryan Adams, two fire team leaders with Bravo Co., Battalion Landing Team, 1st Bn., 2nd Marines, walk through trash-filled ditches near Hit, Iraq, in search of weapons caches during Operation Smokewagon Feb. 2.

Advertisements

Advertisements

SPORTS

Black Widows scorch Tomcats, 75-33

Cpl. Matthew Rainey
Combat Correspondent

Quite a few drops of potent Black Widow venom got into the hearts of the Tomcats when Marine Aviation Logistics



Photos by Cpl. Matthew Rainey

Marine Attack Squadron 311 forward Joseph Hunt snags a rebound during an intramural basketball game against Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 13 at the station gym Feb. 15. While the VMA-311 Tomcats were in the game physically, they were out of the game mentally as they got rolled easily by the MALS-13 Black Widows, 75-33.

Squadron 13 wiped the floor with Marine Attack Squadron 311, 75-33, during intramural basketball action at the station gym Feb. 15.

Had the game lasted an NBA-like 48 minutes instead of the station intramural regulation time of 26 minutes, the Black Widows were on pace to put up almost 140 points.

The Tomcats won the opening tip-off, but their game self-destructed from there.

“We scored off the tip off and then we just gave up after that. It’s like we just laid down,” said Tomcat coach Keith “G” Goodwin. “We came in here strong and we wanted the win, but once we stepped on the court, we lacked focus. It was a one-sided game the whole game.”

Goodwin said his team’s struggle couldn’t be attributed to a single issue. It was a total train wreck.

“We came out in the first half and we weren’t hustling like (we have been as a team for the entire) season. We weren’t playing as a team. We had good looks at shots and they weren’t falling for us either,” said Goodwin.

“We couldn’t keep our heads strong. Once we started arguing, there was no way we could play as a team. Nobody

was able to step up and take control on the court for us.”

Tomcat guard Furnie J. Oden said he thought he knew where the team’s problems stemmed from.

“There was a lot of miscommunication out there on the court tonight,” said Oden. “Nobody was on the same page.”

Goodwin said he had a tough time getting his team to focus on a comeback.

“The team has got to listen to the coach,” said Goodwin. “I’m not the best coach, but when I see something and I tell a player to change something, it’s for a reason.”

MALS-13 sensed the letdown from VMA-311 and attacked like sharks to the smell of blood in the water.

“Once we got up by 15 points, they pretty much gave up and we fed off of that,” said Robert Jackson, Black Widow guard. “Every time they would let up, we pushed it harder.”

“I guess they don’t have much heart on their team,” added Jackson, who had 24 points, nine rebounds and three assists. “We’re MALS-13. We’re the Black Widows. We’re never going to quit. We don’t stop playing until there’s zero on the clock.”

Some Tomcat players were clearly upset about their team’s attitude during the game.

“I’m a player who goes hard one-hundred percent of the time, whether I’m up by fifty points or down by a hundred,” said Oden, the Tomcats leading scorer with nine points. “I thought it was messed up that everybody started giving up when the game wasn’t even over.”

While the Tomcats fell apart as a group of individuals, the Black Widows thrived through team play.

“Our key to victory tonight was that we played as a team,” said Jean “Big G” Guerrier, Black Widow center and coach.



Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 13 guard Robert “Red” Jackson rises above a crowd of Marine Attack Squadron 311 defenders to unleash a jump shot during an intramural basketball game at the station gym Feb. 15. The MALS-13 Black Widows easily won the contest between the unbeaten teams, 75-33.

“When we got the lead, we didn’t back off until we’d won.”

With two undefeated teams playing, only one could leave with their streak intact and the hope to finish the season without a loss.

“It feels great to be the only undefeated team left,” said Guerrier, who led all scorers with 27 points, also recording 12 rebounds, one steal and one block. “(VMA-311) was talking trash all week. They kept saying, ‘We’re coming to get you. We’re coming to get you.’ The whole time I just kept my mouth shut because I do all my trash-talking on the court.

“Now that we’ve knocked off VMA-311, there’s only one team we are gunning for and that’s (Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron),” Guerrier added. “All they do is talk and talk. So when it comes

time to play them, they’re going to get it handed to them just like VMA-311 did.”

Although the Tomcats recorded their first loss of the season, all is not lost quite yet.

“It hurt to lose tonight. But this loss hurt our pride more than it hurt our record,” said Goodwin. “We’ve got a couple weeks left and we need to bounce back strong so we can make a difference in the playoffs.”

The optimistic Tomcats expect to face the Black Widows once again, with the end result being much different.

“It’s definitely not over. We have one loss, that’s it,” said Oden. “We’re not losing anymore. When we see them in the playoffs, it’s going to be a totally different game.”

MALS-13 has heard that before.

Advertisements